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PROGRAM All Things Considered

STATION WETA Radio
NPR Network

DATE September 15, 1984 5:00 P.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Aid to the Contra: Senator Sasser

ALEX CHADWICK: Today's Washington Post reports the Central Intelligence Agency has supplied rocket-equipped airplanes to rebels fighting the government of Nicaragua. The Post says three twin-engine Cessna 02As, popular in many parts of the world for guerrilla-type warfare, were used in a recent attack on a Nicaraguan training site. If it's true the planes were given to the rebels, the act may violate a limit on aid set by Congress.

Senator James Sasser is on a subcommittee that follows military contracting. He's widely quoted in the Post article.

Senator, is the allegation true?

SENATOR JAMES SASSER: It's essentially correct. We have traced these 02 aircraft. Their point of origin was with a New York National Guard unit. They were transferred from there to the Air Force Logistical Command at Andrews Air Force Base. Then they were transferred to a Joint Chief of Staff project called Operation Elephant Herd, which is a secret project. It's a classified project. There, the paper trail ends on the three 02 aircraft. They turn up later on an airstrip in Honduras operated by the Contras. In between, before reaching Honduras and after the paper trail ends, they're found in Delaware undergoing a conversion at a private airfield to carry rockets. And from there, on into Honduras.

CHADWICK: And this is the work, according to you, of the CIA.

SENATOR SASSER: Apparently it is the CIA. We don't have clear evidence at this juncture.